

# Demonstrating Impact: A Guide for Storytelling



**IT'S TIME FOR POLICYMAKERS TO UNDERSTAND** the positive impact of organized philanthropy in northern California.

To achieve this goal, Northern California Grantmakers is working with our members to share stories that demonstrate the powerful impact and unique value the philanthropic community brings to this region. We want to help you tell stories about how you do the work you do, why you fund those you fund and what changes are happening as a result of your investments.

This guide is designed to help you develop stories that show policymakers and other community leaders that the philanthropic sector is a partner in supporting local communities. We encourage you to use it as you begin to outline your strategies for communicating with external audiences, and share your ideas with us.

And as always, thank you for your continued work to improve communities, in California and beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Colin Lacon'.

Colin Lacon - President & CEO  
Northern California Grantmakers

## GETTING STARTED

This toolkit is designed to help your foundation develop stories that demonstrate the powerful impact and unique value that the philanthropic community brings to the region. To help you get started, here are some tips for how to develop a good story.

### A good story....

- Is short, easy to read and not too technical.
- Includes a beginning, middle and end.
- Introduces a specific problem in very basic terms and shows how that problem was solved.
- Highlights the role your organization played in solving that problem.
- Shows an impact on people and places in specific ways, whether northern California or elsewhere.

#### BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

**A**sk those closest to the work for their opinions

**B**rainstorm story ideas with staff or trustees

**C**onsider the audience you are trying to speak to

### A good story isn't....

- A detailed description of your organization and all the issues you support.
- A catalog of every grant your organization has ever made on a certain issue.
- A fact sheet on a specific topic or issue.
- Focused on a new area or strategy that your organization has just started to pursue unless you can point to concrete results and/or outcomes.

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## BRAINSTORM YOUR STORY IDEAS

List 4 potential story ideas below:

1.

2.

3.

4.

## CREATING THE OUTLINE

Pick one of the ideas from your brainstorm. Answer the following questions to create an outline for your story.

NOTE: If you are having trouble answering these questions, your idea might not be the best topic for a story. Try another one of the ideas on your brainstorm list.

**What was the problem?**

**Why did your organization decide to get involved?**

**What role did your foundation play in solving this problem?**

**What was the successful outcome?**

# DRAFTING YOUR STORY

Using the information in your outline as a guide, develop a rough draft of your story. Here's a basic template that can help you organize the information.

## I. INTRODUCTION.

- Set the stage for the reader.
- Describe the problem in basic terms.

## II. INTRODUCE THE FOUNDATION.

- Who are you? Keep it brief.
- Why did your foundation pick this problem?

## III. TELL THE STORY.

- What happened?
- What role did the foundation play in the story?

## IIII. DESCRIBE THE OUTCOME.

- What were the results of your work?
- How did you solve the problem?

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After you've developed your draft, add the following elements:

### TITLE.

- Your story should have a short title that describes your impact.

### QUOTE.

- To add a personal touch, you can include a short quote at the end of your story from staff, a grantee or someone involved in the story.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUNDATION.

- Because there is only room for a brief description of your foundation in the actual story, you can add a short paragraph describing who you are and what you do at the end.

#### NOTE:

We've included a sample story at the end of this toolkit to illustrate how this template works to create a good, easy-to-read story that highlights philanthropy's impact on people and places in northern California.

## EDITING YOUR STORY

Use the following checklist to edit and finalize your rough draft:

- Watch the length.** Stories should be snapshots of what happened; not in-depth narratives. Try to keep your story to 700 words or less.
- Use a storytelling tone.** Does it read like a story or more like a fact sheet or information guide? Try saying “once upon a time...” and then read the first sentence of your story. Work on keeping that tone throughout the story.
- Simplify details and descriptions.** Can you summarize or simplify sections? For example, instead of listing every meeting that happened, say “Through a series of meetings...”
- Watch out for lingo.** Use basic terms and avoid long acronyms and technical language.
- Clarify the foundation’s role.** Is your role clear? If someone read this story, would they say, “Wow! I have a much better understanding of how foundations are having impact in northern California!”?
- Highlight the solution.** Is the outcome clear? Does your story have a clear ending?

# SAMPLE STORY

*TITLE: Short title that describes your impact*

## Restoring A Jewel in the Golden Gate National Parks System

SAN FRANCISCO



### *I. INTRODUCTION:*

*Sets the stage and describes the problem in simple terms*

**LANDS END, A NATIONAL PARK AT THE EDGE OF SAN FRANCISCO** that is part of the Golden Gate National Parks system, attracts more than one million visitors each year. Its trails and rocky coastline offer breathtaking 30-mile views stretching from the Golden Gate Bridge, Marin Headlands and Point Reyes to the Farallon Islands and Pacific Ocean. The area attracts many local visitors as well as out-of-town tourists because of its close proximity to a large residential neighborhood and easy access by public transportation.

Unfortunately, by the late 1990s, the Lands End area had fallen into disrepair as a result of years of wear and tear, vandalism, landslides and overgrown vegetation, making it a dangerous and less attractive recreation destination.

### *II. INTRODUCE THE FOUNDATION:*

*Explains why you got involved*

At the same time, the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, a private family foundation with a long history of supporting restoration projects in the Golden Gate National Parks System, was exploring new opportunities for improving local parks for the people of San Francisco.

### *III. TELL THE STORY:*

*What happened? Include the role of the foundation*

The Goldman Fund reached out to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy for help in identifying places where restoration efforts could make a real impact. Lands End caught their attention. The project was attractive because the area was used by a diverse group of San Francisco residents, and the Parks Conservancy knew they could mobilize strong volunteer support from the community for the effort. In addition, the Goldman Fund knew that the Parks Conservancy had a strong track record of leveraging private philanthropic funds to increase federal funding for improving these parks.

The two groups formed a partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) and launched an effort in 2004 to restore and revitalize the trails, forests and native habitats at Lands End.

*QUOTE: From foundation staff, grantee, or someone else involved in story*

“Thanks to the support of the Goldman Fund and the tireless energy of volunteers in the community, Lands End is once more a treasured jewel in the Golden Gate National Parks system”

—GREG MOORE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
GOLDEN GATE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVANCY

*III. DESCRIBE THE OUTCOME: How did the story end?*

Since then, the Goldman Fund has donated \$8.6 million to this collaborative undertaking. The area has been transformed with paved parking areas, a new scenic overlook with benches and safety walls, expanded trails, improved visitor amenities, and restored views of the ocean by trimming back trees and other growth.

The restoration efforts have also attracted robust community support through a volunteer program run by the Parks Conservancy and NPS called the Lands End Stewardship Program which has close to 900 community members working to take care of the park. Along the way, other organizations such as the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation and the California Coastal Conservancy have offered support to the project as well.



In 2010, the project was honored with an award from San Francisco Beautiful for improving the quality of life in San Francisco.

There is more work to underway to continue to enhance this special place, but the project has made huge steps towards restoring Lands End to a beautiful, safe recreation area for all to enjoy.

*DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUNDATION: Include a short paragraph about your foundation*

**THE RICHARD AND RHODA GOLDMAN FUND:** *Since its establishment in 1951 by San Francisco philanthropists and civic leaders Richard and Rhoda Goldman, the Goldman Fund has contributed more than a half-billion dollars to a variety of charitable causes in San Francisco, as well as nationally and internationally. The Fund supports programs that focus on improving the quality of life in the San Francisco Bay Area, the environment and Jewish affairs.*

*LINKS: For more information*

FOR MORE INFORMATION,  
PLEASE VISIT:

The Richard and Rhoda  
Goldman Fund  
[www.goldmanfund.org](http://www.goldmanfund.org)

The Golden Gate National  
Parks Conservancy  
[www.parksconservancy.org](http://www.parksconservancy.org)

The National Park Service  
[www.nps.gov/goga](http://www.nps.gov/goga)